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ABSTRACT

This booklet encourages potential high school dropouts to stay in school. It opens by claiming that the choice to drop out of school is the student's but lists negative potential outcomes of that choice. The next several sections discuss reasons why parents; the school; the community; businesses; federal, state, and local governments; and the military care if students dropped out of school. Thirteen questions are listed which ask potential dropouts about problems related to schooling. It is recommended that students answering any of these questions affirmatively ask the advice of others, such as the school principal or a respected businessperson. Suggestions for the student to help himself in school are provided, including watching one's behavior; following rules; coming to school regularly and getting to class on time; learning to get along with classmates; showing respect; and studying hard and doing homework. (ABL)

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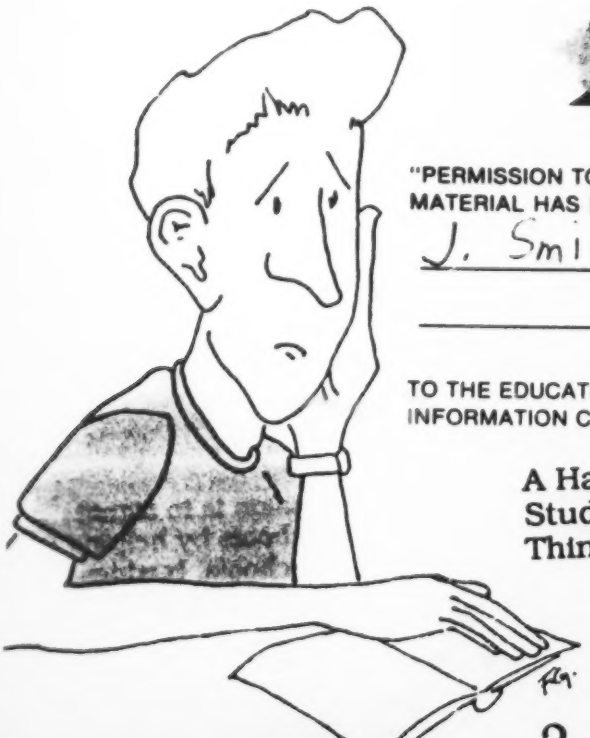
So you want to DROP OUT of school...



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A Handbook for Students Who Are Thinking of Leaving School

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The National Dropout Prevention Center's mission is to significantly reduce the dropout rate in American schools by helping to develop public-private partnerships between schools, businesses and communities.

For more information, or to obtain additional copies of this publication, contact: The National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29634-5111 or call (800) 868-3475 in SC or (800) 443-6392.

The choice is yours.

So, you want to drop out of school? It's your decision, but you need to know what's in store.

- You'll have to *compete* with high school graduates for jobs and will be less likely to find a job.
- *If* you can find a job, the pay will be *low.*
- If you're a young *female* dropout, you'll have an extremely hard time finding a job.
- If you're *Black, Hispanic* or *Native American,* you're in a group that drops out of school more often and has a higher unemployment rate than Whites.
- You *can't* get into any branch of the armed forces without a high school diploma.
- You may become one of many dropouts involved in *crime,* and you may spend time in *jail.*

Only you can make the decision to drop out of school! The stakes are high — having a productive life or falling into a pattern of failure, boredom and crime. Do you care about your future? Other people care — and they want you to stay in school!

Your parents care.

If you've ever attended a high school or college graduation, you can readily see how proud parents are when their children walk across the stage to receive their diploma. Your parent(s) or guardian will be proud also. They know that once you receive that high school diploma, your chances for success in life are better. You need their support, love and understanding. **Your parents want you to stay in school!**

Your school cares.

You might be sick to death of your school at this moment. Stop and think! The school is not there for you to drop out; its major goal is to have you graduate! The school does not receive credit when you drop out. Every effort is, or should be, made to keep you in school. **Your principal, your counselors, your teachers and your friends want you to stay in school.**

The community cares.

The community is aware of the problems related to drop-outs. For example, many dropouts wind up on welfare rolls because they lack education. Many abuse drugs and alcohol. Others turn to crime and wind up in jail. All these things cost a lot in terms of tax money and community resources that could be spent in more productive ways. Citizens realize that a student who stays in school has a better chance of getting a job and becoming a good member of the community. **Citizens in the community want you to stay in school!**

Businesses care.

The business world needs people who are able to do a job requiring certain skills. They need many people to do many different jobs. The money they make depends on how well workers contribute to the entire operation of the company. They need workers who are able to read and understand instructions and do their best work. Poorly trained persons who can't read or write well and who don't understand the job process have nothing to offer a business! **Business people want you to stay in school!**

Federal, state and local government care.

Government agencies care because high school dropouts can't make enough money to pay taxes and add to the revenue it takes to run this country. Dropouts pay very little taxes and are often on welfare.

Maybe you don't care to pay taxes. Did you ever stop to think what you would lose if everyone decided not to pay taxes or if we earned so little money we couldn't pay taxes?

What would we do without adequate...

- fire departments?
- police departments?
- sewage systems?
- health departments, hospitals and schools?

Good citizens pay taxes so that they and their children can have a better life! **The government wants you to stay in school!**

The military cares.

It is important to the security of our country that we have a sufficient number of young men and women to serve in the different branches of the armed forces. We must have capable men and women to carry out the important duties performed by our military branches. The duties are becoming much harder. Much of the technology used in civilian jobs is also used in the military. Therefore, no branch of the armed services will take you without a high school diploma. Many students who dropped out of school are now trying to get a high school diploma so they can get into the armed forces. **The military wants you to stay in school!**

Do you have serious problems?

If you're thinking about dropping out of school, your problems must be serious. Answer YES or NO to the following questions.

1. Are you having problems reading and understanding your assignments?
2. Are you a grade or two behind your friends and feel a sense of failure?

3. Are you using drugs and alcohol and do not feel like getting up to go to school?
4. Are you having family problems?
5. Are your parents asking you to go to work now?
6. Are you in conflict with your teachers and/or the principal?
7. Do you feel that you're being treated unfairly in the school setting?
8. Are you usually alone at school?
9. Have you been suspended from school for a period of time and have decided not to return?
10. Are you pregnant and don't know what to do?
11. Do you feel physically ill most of the time?
12. Do you feel that you have failed at almost everything you've tried?
13. Are you frequently absent from or late to school?

If you answered "YES" to one or more of these questions, you need to talk to someone — immediately. Find someone you can trust and talk to him or her about your problems! Here are some people who can help you and give you good advice:

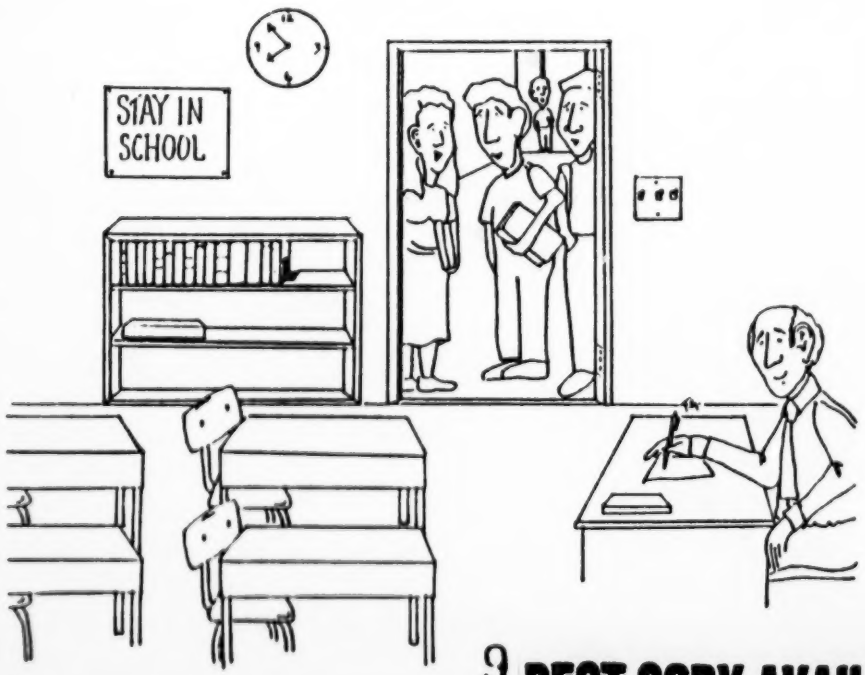
- The principal
- Your counselor
- Your parent(s)
- Your minister
- A trusted friend
- The teacher you like best
- A respected businessman or businesswoman
- An adult you can trust

Can you like school more?

You can do a lot to help yourself in school! Try these suggestions:

- **Watch your behavior.**
  The way you act has a lot to do with how you're treated. Even a caring teacher will hesitate to help you if you're hostile, angry and insulting.

- **Follow the rules.**
  A caring teacher expects you to obey the rules whether you like them or not. Any organization must have rules and guidelines to run smoothly. The rules cannot be changed for one person. However, you do have a right to expect the rules to be applied fairly. If you don't like a rule or think that a teacher is being unfair, talk with the teacher or the principal.
- **Come to school regularly, and get to class on time.**
  Excessive absences, being late to class, or cutting school only places you in a position to fail. You're hurting yourself when you're not in school or class. You can't learn if you're absent.
- **Learn to get along with your classmates.**
  Fighting, other disruptive behavior, drugs and alcohol can lead to suspension or expulsion. It is better to learn with your classmates in school than by yourself at home.



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- **Show respect for yourself by showing respect for others.**
  If you give respect, you'll get it in return.
- **Study hard and do your homework.**
  Learning is hard work; it takes effort. But, it can be fun, and it opens the door for you to be successful now in school and later when you graduate and get a job.

You're only in school for a short time in your life. Make the most of it. **Get your high school diploma!**

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